

MEDITATION

LET MEDITATION HELP YOU MANAGE
YOUR SELF



AMR AMNA

MEDITATION

*Let Meditation Help
You Manage Your Self*

Introduction

Self-mastery, the ability to manage yourself, is a super important character trait or quality, one you need to cultivate if you don't already have it, or improve upon if you already have it but could use a bit more of it; it's almost certain that no matter who you are, you could use a bit more self-mastery in your life.

Would you like to know why learning how to manage yourself is so important? Well, it's simple; because by being a great self-manager, you become someone capable of "*acting instead of reacting*" to every day circumstances, experiences, emotions, demands of life, etc. When you develop the ability to act instead of reacting to all the experiences that make up your life experience, here is what happens:

*: You stop reacting emotionally to circumstances you deem unanticipated or undesired. For instance, once you develop the ability to manage your SELF, instances of reacting with anger to common trigger situations/circumstances shall decrease significantly.

*: When you develop self-mastery, taking action towards your chief aims and aspirations shall become easier because self-mastery is the ability to *become aware and manage your attention and energies*. For instance, once you develop self-mastery, you shall become more aware of your tendency to procrastinate and postpone important tasks; how this affects your overall life also shines through brightly, so shall the benefits and disadvantages of your actions or inactions.

From this 'awareness,' you will gain self-knowledge and become able to see how the various decisions you make shape your life, and because you will have developed self-awareness, you will start making decisions and

taking actions that ultimately lead to the fulfilment of your chief aims, the life of your dreams.

*: Moreover, when you develop the ability to self-regulate, i.e. when you become capable of managing yourself in whatever situation or circumstance, you also become capable of influencing your behavior. The ability to influence your behavior at any given time means you can pause before you act.

The ability to control yourself, what we shall henceforth regard as self-mastery—we shall also use the various associated synonyms—has tons of other benefits such as increased patience, grit, increased focus, a purposeful life, more peace and happiness, etc.

The essence of this guide is to show you how to develop self-mastery using the most advanced self-management tool or strategy known to man: *meditation*.

Let's begin!

Thanks again for purchasing this book. I hope you enjoy it!

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Self-Mastery: Why and How Meditation Can Help You Manage Your SELF

The first thing we shall do here is seek to cultivate a baseline foundation of what it means to *“manage yourself.”*

The ability to manage yourself has various other names. For instance, when talking about the subject matter, we often use words such as self-mastery, self-regulation, self-control, self-discipline, willpower, self-restraint, and other words whose essence is to define *the ability to exert control over ones’ actions, decisions, emotions, habits, impulses, etc.*

This, *“it’s the ability to be aware of yourself, to understand your various mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical states, and from this awareness, to control the various stimuli-triggered impulses that lead to the creation of your life,”* shall be our baseline definition of self-mastery, or rather, of what it means to manage yourself.

While the definition may sound scientific and complex, it is in fact not. Simplified, what this means is that self-mastery is the ability to become aware of your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual states of being, and from this awareness, control how you act and react to internal and external stimuli such as your thoughts, emotions, and the various experiences and happenings in your life.

Self-mastery is the ability to become aware of, to understand, and then to control your thoughts, emotions, actions, decisions, and habits within any given situation. We can also state that self-control is the ability

to command and regulate the only thing any of us has complete control over: *ourselves*.

Epictetus, a great philosopher, once noted the nature of human existence by saying, “*It’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.*” Managing yourself is exactly that: the ability to control how you act or react to the circumstances that make up your life. It is not the ability to control what happens; none of us can control that!

Developing the ability to manage your thoughts, words, actions, emotions, decisions, etc. can have a dramatic positive effect on all areas of your life. For instance, by becoming more aware of your inner state, i.e. your emotions, thoughts, mental states, beliefs, etc. you effectively become more aware of how these emotional states influence your decisions and actions in life, and by becoming thus aware, you become capable of self-regulation.

If you are wondering what any of this has to do with meditation, here is the thing:

How and Why Meditation Makes You More Self-Mastered

The first step to self-mastery is usually self-awareness. As used here, self-awareness means being “conscious, aware, or cognizant of your conscious and unconscious self, and of everything.” When we say, “*he or she is very self-aware,*” what we mean by this is that the person in question has developed the ability to be perceptive of his or her emotions, actions, decisions, habits, thoughts, actions, reactions, environment, etc.

When you are self-aware, it means you know how you act (or fail to act) in given situations, and are actively conscious of your beliefs, thought patterns, emotions, physical and nonphysical actions, and how all of these

things influence the life you live right now and aspire to live in the future.

As an example, when you are self-aware, it means that whenever you fail to take action towards your goals or aims, you can effectively describe why you failed to do so, and to analyze whether the reason (s) is valid or just a mere excuse.

Meditation helps you develop self-mastery because the most important thing meditation does is help you become more self-aware, i.e. more aware of yourself, your thoughts, emotions, decisions, actions, beliefs, habits, etc.

As far as definitions go, we can define meditation as *“the practice of focusing the mind on one aspect of existence such as your thoughts, your breath, an activity, object, or the nature of something for a specific amount of time.”*

When you adopt regular meditation, because the practice calls on you to direct your conscious and unconscious awareness and energies on observing one aspect of existence—the breath is a great example—you develop laser sharp awareness of yourself and of the present moment.

From this awareness develops mentally clarity, the ability to see cause and effect, to be conscious in every moment of life as it happens (to experience the NOW), and the ability to experience a calm, observative state of mind and from it, achieve self-knowledge, self-development, and self-actualization.

When cause and effect becomes clearer to you, your ability to control how you act and react to your thoughts, emotions, and various circumstances improves significantly.

If self-mastery comes from self-awareness, then meditation is the most effective self-awareness tool or strategy in existence.

Here is another reason for this bold assertion.

At its very core, self-awareness, and indeed self-management/mastery, is about being able to observe, explore, self-reflect, and reconnect with our true self, and to act towards this end (*being our true self*). Self-awareness is *“to know thyself.”*

When you know yourself, you know what you want (and do not want) in life and in whatever circumstances; knowing this is bound to turn you into a deliberate actor, a person in complete control of his or her thoughts, emotions, actions, beliefs, habits, etc.

Developing self-awareness and self-mastery largely depends on being self-conscious enough to manage yourself, your thoughts, your decisions, your actions, your habits, etc. as you live a modern life, a life full of internal and external stimuli.

Habitual meditation makes you consciously aware enough to control your actions and reactions, emotions, thoughts, habits, behaviors, beliefs, etc. it also does one other important thing: *it helps you become nonjudgmental towards all experiences.*

Practicing detachment or nonjudgment may not seem like a big deal but it is because when you can become aware or observative of yourself and off everything—your breath, your thoughts, your decisions, etc.—without explicitly filtering everything through a sieve of preconceived biases, controlling your impulses and therefore yourself becomes relatively easier.

From our discussions thus far, we can rightfully surmise that the best thing about meditation is that it aids in the cultivation of self-awareness. Meditation helps you become more aware of your thoughts, your words, your actions, habits, beliefs, character traits, more importantly, where you direct your attention and therefore your energies.

When you become more aware of these things, it becomes easier to see the areas of your life where you are not practicing self-control, and from this awareness, to embark on using meditation to become even more aware and controlled!

“Watch your thoughts, they become words;
watch your words, they become actions;
watch your actions, they become habits;
watch your habits, they become character;
watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”
– Frank Outlaw

Now that you know what it means to be self-mastered/controlled as well as how meditation—specifically the self-awareness it helps develop—helps you manage yourself better, the next logical step is to learn how to meditate for improved self-mastery in your life.

The next section looks at this:

How To Meditate For Improved Self-Mastery

Various research studies have shown that all forms of meditation or meditative practices have the potential to improve human self-regulation and self-control, and to reduce stress and anxiety.

One example of such a research study is by Esther K. Papies, Ph.D., a social psychology professor at the University of Glasgow, and a thought leader in the fields of goal-related behavior and dieting. She led a three-part study whose intent was to determine how attention-based mindfulness meditation would influence participants' response to food and sex appeal, two of the most appetitive stimuli in the world.

[In their findings](#), Papies et.al concluded that, *"being conscious of ones thoughts and treating them nonjudgmentally, as events that left unattended, will leave just as fast as they came, has a tendency to improve self-mastery and control over ones inclinations and behaviors."*

The research team specifically noted that simply being consciously aware of your thoughts significantly improves your ability to regulate your attention, focus, thoughts, emotions, decisions, actions, etc."

The starting sentence of this chapter notes that we have various forms of meditation and meditative practices. This is indeed true: we have many types of meditation and meditative practices. By tuning into and reconnecting with your present experience, you can walk, cook, eat, listen, talk, or even observe everything meditatively or mindfully.

Mindful Attention: A Practice in Self-regulation

Mindful attention is the simplest meditative practice. Formal and informal practice of mindful attention has the potential to help you become more conscious and aware of various elements of your existence.

A Simple Breath Attention Meditation

The most common mindful attention practice is that of observing the breath, a practice whose premise is simple: *reconnect with your breath, observe it nonjudgmentally, and when you notice that the mind has wandered off from the breath, to acknowledge this nonjudgmentally and then gently refocus the mind's conscious and unconscious attention on observing and being one with the breath.*

The foundational step in this meditative practice is to immerse yourself in experiencing the breath as it moves in and out of your being. For instance, you can bring all your attention to your breath, notice where you feel the in-breath the most, travel with it as it travels through the air canal into the abdomen and lungs, and to notice the moment it turns into the out-breath and rushes out of your being in a hot puff. Should you notice that your mind has wandered off at any point during the practice, exercise being nonjudgmental towards this, and then gently refocus your attention on the breath.

The more consistently you practice this simple meditation practice, the more self-aware you shall become, and as you know, the more self-aware you become, the more self-knowledgeable you become. When you know yourself well, the easier it becomes self-regulate and to take deliberate action towards self-actualization.

We can port this mindful attention meditation of the breath to cultivating more self-awareness and self-control. In such as case, the practice would remain the

same; the primary thing that would change is the ‘what we are mindful or attentive of. For instance, instead of being mindful of the breath, you could perhaps become attentive and aware of an element such as an area of your life where you would like to practice more self-management.

Let us assume, for instance, that you struggle with regulating your social media usage and that this habit is affecting your life adversely because you often postpone important tasks and commitments just so you can spend time on social media.

In this example, instead paying attention to the breath, the practice would shift from mindfully observing the breath to mindful observance, awareness, and attention of every aspect of your ‘perceived’ inability to regulate your social media use.

You would then bring all your conscious and unconscious attention to this very aspect and embark on a process of nonjudgmental awareness and observance of everything you relate to this: your thoughts, words, emotions, actions, etc.

Of importance to remember is that meditation—for whatever end—is simply the act of becoming aware and nonjudgmentally accepting towards all that is in the present, the NOW, or towards a specific experience or nature of something! The more you become aware of your thoughts, emotions, behaviors, beliefs, and actions towards specific aspects and areas of your life especially those where you struggle with self-control, the easier it shall be to see the causality of every experience that makes up your life or existence.

Using our “social media struggle” example, the idea would then be to [consciously] ride the wave of everything—emotions, sensations, thoughts, etc.—resulting from our focused attention of this aspect of existence. Because meditation and self-awareness are

about nonjudgmental observance of everything that 'is' in the present moment, being able to observe each thought, emotion, feeling, or belief gives you the ability to pause, think things through, and act in a controlled manner especially in situations that call for it.

You can use this meditative practice in different areas of your life. For instance, if you want to practice higher emotional self-control, self-awareness would be the first step towards this level of self-mastery. As we have seen, meditation helps you cultivate self-awareness.

In this case, a typical meditative practice would revolve around tuning your conscious attention to your present level of emotional self-control—how you act within given circumstances—and to observe everything brought about by deliberate attentiveness of this particular aspect of your life.

Deliberateness of practice is very important here. Our minds have a natural tendency to jump from one branch of thought to the next in a ceaseless process that breeds forgetfulness, the opposite of self-awareness/mindfulness. When you become forgetful, self-mastery becomes that much more difficult to practice and experience in your life simply because by being unaware, you live life unconsciously. A life lived unconsciously is a life devoid of control, willpower, self-discipline, self-mastery and above all else, such as life is a life of unfulfilled potential. On the other hand, a life lived consciously, with present awareness, a nonjudgmental attitude, and a healthy dose of detachment, which is what all meditative practices help you cultivate, is a life rich in self-direction towards self-actualization.

*A life lived of choice is a life of conscious
action. A life lived of chance is a life of
unconscious creation.*

– Neale Donald Walsch

Action step

This section has illustrated everything you need to know about meditating for improved self-awareness and self-mastery. Be deliberate about practice of the mindful attention practice outlined here and you will undoubtedly develop a profound level of self-awareness that will help you become more deliberate in all areas of your life.

In closing this section, as a matter of importance, you should note that mindful self-awareness and attention are not a default or natural state of mind or being. Our minds have a natural tendency to jump from one branch of thought to the next—in meditation discussions, we call this the “monkey mind.”

To use meditation as a self-awareness and self-regulation tool, the most important thing you need to do is practice conscious awareness and meditation consistently until both become habitual. Because attentive awareness is not a natural state of being, in the initial stages of the practice, expect the mind to wander off severally. Let it; this is natural.

During all forms of meditation, your one and only task—and this is for lack of a better word—is to remain consciously aware of what you have chosen to become aware or attentive of in the present moment, and when the mind wanders off from this, to [gently and nonjudgmentally] refocus it. At first, the difference in time between the mind wandering off and the moment you notice that it has wandered off will be significant. As you stick with the practice, however, the period shall

shorten, and you shall start developing the ability to practice nonjudgmental awareness for prolonged periods and in various areas of your life. At this point, deliberate mindfulness or self-direction in important areas of your life shall become almost natural.

In the next section, we shall take everything we have discussed here and turn it into an actionable meditative practice you can use to develop deeper self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-regulation, and to attain self-actualization.

A Mindful Path to Self-Mastery: A Systemic Approach

The essence of this section of the guide is to outline for you a systemic approach you can take towards using meditation as a tool that helps you cultivate more self-assuredness in life so that in so doing, you can tap into and unleash your full potential and live a more conscious and purposeful life.

In the first section, we noted that managing yourself is about being a master of yourself, i.e. being able to know thyself truly well and to direct your behavior, decisions, and actions towards a desired intention or aim.

Self-mastery is deliberate living; it means being in complete control of, and responsible for your life. As noted in the precious section, without self-consciousness or awareness, practicing self-mastery is impossible.

What the last chapter failed to mention explicitly—but advanced in the undertone of our discussions—is that self-mastery is a practice; without practice, there is no mastery. Without internalizing conscious and moment-to-moment self-awareness, which you do by practicing meditation regularly and consistently, you cannot attain self-mastery because in its very sense, self-mastery is the ability to be aware of what is, to accept it nonjudgmentally, and to direct your actions and reaction towards that which is at any given moment.

You can practice mindfulness meditation as an integral part of your daily life—*only by doing this is it possible to achieve self-mastery and become able to regulate your thoughts, decisions, and actions*—by implementing the following meditative steps in different areas of your life.

STEP 1: Betroth And Then Marry Mindful Awareness

The rallying call throughout this book has been that without self-awareness, self-regulation is impossible. The primary reason for this is that, as mentioned within the last paragraphs of the last section, our minds have a natural tendency to jump from one branch of thought, emotion, decision, etc. to the next. This leads to unconscious living, a state where you are not in control of your life because you are not aware of how you are living it in the present moment or of how your thoughts, emotions, and actions influence the decisions you make in the present moment and the life experiences you create—the mind is the creator.

Mind is the creator of everything. You should therefore guide it to create only good. If you cling to a certain thought with dynamic will power, it finally assumes a tangible outward form. When you are able to employ your will always for constructive purposes, you become the controller of your destiny.

Paramahansa Yogananda

To develop the ability to self-regulate as you navigate the different situations and circumstances that make up your life experiences, self-awareness shall repeatedly serve as your first line of defense.

Again, mindfulness meditation, what the last section called mindful attention, is the best way to cultivate this awareness. When you become more self-aware, you develop the ability to live in the present moment and to experience everything that is happening in it. By consistently striving towards consciously reconnecting with the present moment and your life as it happens from one moment to the next, you inadvertently develop the ability to see how various states of being develop into your life experiences.

Mindfulness meditation or attention is a consistent process of arrival into a pure state of self-awareness. As mentioned, the more you practice mindful attentiveness, the more intuitive self-awareness becomes, and the easier it becomes to achieve self-knowledge, and to use this knowledge to embark on self-development, the most powerful form of self-regulation because it entails directing your behavior long enough to turn behaviors into automatic habits.

To make self-awareness habitual so that you can practice it as a self-management tool in different areas, circumstances, and aspects of your life as you engage actively with your life, always seek to bring your mind to the present moment, particularly to what you are doing in the present moment.

Paying conscious attention to yourself and to what you are doing from one moment to the next makes you a conscious participator in your life. When you are consciously participating in your life, you are consistently exercising your ability to self-manage.

Whether you are eating, exercising, thinking, making important decisions, etc. always strive towards becoming consciously aware of your thoughts, emotions, and attitude, and towards experiencing them nonjudgmentally and with complete presence. Practicing this step as consistently as possible will lead to enhanced self-mastery in different, important areas of your life such as your relationships, your spirituality, and even your finances.

STEP 2: Practice Discernment

We have severally mentioned how self-awareness leads to self-knowledge, self-development, and eventual self-actualization. Part of the arrival process into this state of self-knowledge, *“into knowing thyself,”* is becoming aware enough to realize that self-mastery is a conscious

decision to behave or act a specific way within any given circumstance.

The ability to discern is the ability to become aware of, and to distinguish between various choices, decisions, thoughts, beliefs, actions, and to see how various choices influence various circumstances and the life you create—again, your choices create your life.

Using meditation to improve your level of self-regulation is a call to become more discerning towards how various thoughts, decision, choices, and actions lead to various life circumstances and experiences.

To practice discernment as an integral part of a meditative, consciously lived life, awareness is the first prerequisite because without it, causality is not clear because we become 'blind' to the various available choices and from this lack of awareness, we become incapable of making conscious decision.

To use meditation to become more discerning in your life, as you involve yourself in the activities of daily life and make choices that shape your life, strive to live in the present moment by becoming more aware of it and of yourself as you live in it. Work towards consistently reconnecting with your highest self, the part of your being that knows what you truly want and desire by asking yourself questions such as, *"what do I truly want?"* *"How would I like to act or react to this situation, and is an action or reaction necessary in the first place?"* *"What is my intended outcome?"* *"If I had more self-control, how would I behave, act, or react in this area of my life?"* Such questions anchor you to the present moment. This allows you to discern how what you choose to do in the present moment creates your life experiences.

Discernment is an especially important step because once you become self-conscious or aware, this quality automatically supports you into being more conscious of how various thoughts, choices, and decisions leads to

tangible elements in your life such as specific outcomes —say, achieving (or not) a certain intended aim or goal.

In instances where you struggle with self-management, take a few moments to reconnect with your breath and to practice mindfulness attention. After this, become more aware of all your states: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual states, and of your thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and behaviors towards the area of your life where you struggle.

Take an example where you struggle with waking up early or completing your work projects on time and you would like to start being more deliberate and self-controlled in these areas of your life. Whenever you notice yourself struggling, take a moment to reconnect with your breath, and then become attentive of everything related to this aspect of your life as it arises.

By becoming more aware of how you act (or fail to act) and observing various thoughts and sentiments as they arise, you shall also start developing the ability to discern between what is truly right and good for you and what is not. Additionally, by becoming aware of how your thoughts create your life, you shall start feeling more driven to become more involved with your life and to make decisions and choices that ultimately align with the life you want to create for yourself, a life of intentionality in every area of your life.

STEP 3: Adopt Intentional/Purposeful Living

Here is something most people do not realize about the various forms of meditation available. By guiding you down the path to cultivating present awareness and becoming more nonjudgmentally discerning towards various aspects and elements of your life, thoughts, emotions, actions, behaviors, habits, beliefs, etc.,

meditation also helps you feel more in control of yourself and of your life.

When you feel more in control of yourself and of your life, the resultant effect is that you awaken to the following realization: your life is yours to shape and create, and that the only way to create and actualize a life of your choosing is by being self-directive and controlled.

To practice meditation/mindfulness as an integral part of your daily life is to live intentionally, to make decisions and choices consciously, and to engage purposefully with every aspect of your existence. For instance, to use meditation as a path to self-mastery, once you discern the various choices available to you within a given situation where you struggle with self-mastery, and from this discernment, make a conscious choice, purposeful living is having the courage to focus on and direct all your energies on acting.

A life well lived is a daily practice of conscious living: living life in the present moment, making decisions in the present moment, thinking about and experiencing the present moment nonjudgmentally because life happens in the present.



“It's being here now that's important. There's no past and there's no future. Time is a very misleading thing. All there is ever, is the now. We can gain experience from the past, but we can't relive it; and we can hope for the future, but we don't know if there is one.”

– George Harrison

A desire to self-manage/regulate is a desire to live a more controlled, purposeful, and intentional life. You cannot do this if you fail to entwine intentionality into every aspect of your daily existence. To become more self-regulative, you have to cultivate moment-to-moment mindfulness, and to stay nonjudgmental aware of yourself as you exist in this very moment so that as you

experience this moment, you can truly experience it and be intentional about how you use it, which is what self-management means: the ability to control your SELF.

Using meditation to enhance your level of intentionality as you live your life can take many forms. For instance, reflective styles of mindfulness meditation such as journaling can help you become intentionally conscious of how your daily routines, thoughts, emotions, behaviors, choices, and habits shape your character and life.

Another way to use meditation to practice self-mastery and intentional living is by consistently reconnecting with your chief aims or goals and connecting that to whatever you are doing in the present moment. Ideally, you should direct every moment of your conscious life to creating the life you want, which calls on you to take deliberate action towards the actualization of your aims.

By becoming more aware of how you are using this precious moment, the now, your state of mind distills and clarifies into a conscious, nonjudgmental mindset towards all the experiences and circumstances that make up your life. This mindset allows you to create connections between your choices and actions in the present moment to the life you want to move towards or create, and to make decisions that ultimately help you become aware of your external, stimuli-driven impulses, and to control these impulses so that you can direct your attention and energy on what matters.

STEP 4: Practice Willpower-Based Attention

Formal meditation and informal mindfulness—being aware of the present moment and of yourself while in it irrespective of what you are doing—are a practice in willpower, the practice of restraining or controlling your impulses. When you start meditating consistently,

research has shown that your willpower increases at par with your ability to self-regulate and direct your attention and energies.

The various types of meditative strategies we have discussed in this book will inadvertently help you develop stronger willpower.

Mindfulness meditation helps increase your self-control and willpower because awareness, a state of being consciously attentive of, and engaged with the present moment, is the element whose embrace it calls for. When you become capable or nonjudgmental awareness and observance of the present moment and everything existing within it, you start realizing that acting or reacting to anything is within your control and that you are responsible for yourself. This realization allows you to become managerial of your attention, focus, and energies, and to see how various thoughts, emotions, actions, decisions, and choices lead to various tangible circumstances in your present life

You can use meditation with the specific intent of improving your willpower and ability to self-regulate. To do so, all you really have to do is spend at least five minutes of your day being in a quiet and peaceful area, practicing mindful attentiveness of a specific element such a specific word, sound, image, etc.

By cultivating attentiveness of this element, which you can do by noticing instances of the mind wandering off and then nonjudgmentally realigning it to your point of focus, you exercise your self-control and willpower muscles.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of the book. Thank you for reading and congratulations for reading until the end.

The effectiveness of meditation as a self-regulation tool comes from the state of awareness that denotes habitual meditation.

When you make meditation habitual and from it, become more aware of the inter-connectedness of everything, and when you become self-knowledgeable enough to discern between which choices, thoughts, actions, habits, beliefs, behaviors, etc. are good for you and which ones are not, self-control and development become easier, and self-actualization, the final stage of personal development, becomes inevitable.

If you found the book valuable, can you recommend it to others? One way to do that is to post a review on Amazon.

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Thank you and good luck!